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REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 6-20 are pending, including independent claims 1, 6, 8 and 15. In view of Applicants' previous amendments and arguments, the previous rejections have been withdrawn. However, all claims have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) on the basis of new prior art, with U.S. Patent 6,999,717 ("Spratt") being the primary reference, and the rejection has been made final. Applicants request entry of the proposed amendments in order to place the claims in condition for allowance. The amendments were not presented earlier because the present rejection applies new art.

By the proposed amendments, claims 2, 4, 9 and 12 are cancelled, independent claims 1, 6, 8 and 15 are amended to recite additional features, and dependent claims 3, 10, 11, 13 and 14 are amended to correct dependency. The amendments to the independent claims add the features previously found in dependent claims 4 and 12, so that no new matter is added, and the features have already been searched. Applicants submit that the amended claims clearly are patentable over the cited art, as can be seen for example from a discussion of independent claims 15.

Claim 15 describes a message processing device in an inter-vehicle network of a plurality of message processing devices located in respective vehicles for transferring messages among the vehicles. Each such message processing device can process an incoming message having a body including data to be transmitted and a header, where the header includes a valid geographical zone in which the message is valid and a flag that is set when the message reaches the valid geographical zone. When a message processing device in the network receives a message, it determines whether the message is received in the valid geographical zone. If so, or if the message is not received in the valid geographical zone and the flag is not set, the message is transferred to at least one other message processing device in the network. When the message is received within the valid geographical zone, predetermined processing (other than transferring the message) is executed based on the data in the message body. In operation, therefore, a message originating from outside the valid geographical zone (flag not set yet) will continue to be transferred on; each message processing device that receives the transferred message within the valid geographical zone will

execute the predetermined processing, set the flag if it is the first time the message is received within the valid geographical zone, and transfer the message on; and if the message is then transferred out of the valid geographical zone, it will not be transferred further (because the flag has been set).

The unique and advantageous operation of the settable flag in conjunction with a specified valid geographical zone is described in the Application, for example, at ¶¶ 9, 14, 41, 58, 77 and 78. Using a flag that is set when the message reaches the valid geographical zone enables a message which has not yet reached the valid zone to be transferred efficiently without being cancelled. Further, setting the flag once the message reaches the valid zone provides an efficient way to thereafter stop the repeated transfer of the message outside of the valid zone.

This feature is not at all described or suggested in the cited references. The Examiner cites the use of flags in Spratt, but those flags are not used in the same way and have nothing to do with the specific flag and its operation as recited in Applicants' amended claims.

The specific construction and operation of Applicants' message processing device to process a flag in consideration of a specified valid geographical zone, as described above for claim 15, is added by the proposed amendments to each independent claim. Moreover, independent claims 1 and 8 recite an additional requirement of a valid time duration. That is, in reference to claim 1 for example, the message header also includes a valid time duration, and the message can only be transferred to another message processing device, and the predetermined processing of data in the message can only occur, if the message is received within the valid time duration.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the entry of the proposed amendments and submit that the amended independent claims are patentable over the cited references.

The remaining dependent claims are also patentable for at least the same reasons. In addition, dependent claims 10-11, 13-14, and 16-19 recite specific ways of identifying the geographical zone. Spratt expressly describes only one way of


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identifying a locale, i.e., using cellular radio cell IDs (col. 10, lines 40-45), which is different than the specific ways claimed by Applicants. Claim 20 recites a navigation device whose map display screen can be used to set a valid geographical zone. The references do not disclose this feature either.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application. If the Examiner believes the application still is not in condition for allowance, he is invited to telephone Applicants' undersigned attorney at 312-321-4723.

Respectfully submitted,


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